

Testimony of James Heffernan
To the Appropriations Committee

February 18, 2010

Senator Toni Harp,

Representative John Geragosian &

Members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is James Heffernan my son, Brian (photo attached), received outstanding residential and day program services from Harc for over thirteen years before his death several years ago. Currently, I serve on the DDS Council on Developmental Services and the Harc Board of Directors. Thank you for accepting the following written testimony, since I will not be able to attend the February 18th Appropriations Committee Hearing.

It is fair to say that everyone across the state understands the fiscal bind that Connecticut is in and that we appreciate the dedication of the legislators and their staff as you work hard to come to grips with this enormous challenge. *However, as budgets are fine tuned, tweaked and cut to meet revenue shortfalls the financial burden should not be borne on the backs of the disabled and the agencies that support them. Please remember that we are talking about fragile people, not just dollars.*

"Attendance based funding" is the *wrong model* to employ with DDS contractors since it imposes draconian penalties and threatens the existence of providers who have been under funded and struggling for more than twenty years. Connecticut must continue to meet its long standing responsibility to support the health and welfare of its most vulnerable citizens with funding models that provide adequately for service providers. A 90% Attendance Based Funding model will severely impede the ability of non-profit agencies to deliver the critical direct care services that your friends, neighbors and relatives need to care for loved ones with multiple intellectual and physical challenges.

How are non-profit agencies supposed to maintain required staffing infrastructures when their budget allocations will be reduced whenever their clients' unexpected health emergencies (which historically and understandably are above the norm in both frequency and duration) push attendance below the prescribed threshold? Please remember that medical procedures and illnesses deemed "simple" in the general population are never "simple" for people with disabilities! People who require 100% support for every activity of daily living should not have unrealistic 90% attendance factors impact their care.

I would suggest that the legislature and DDS work toward a solution that follows the lead of the Connecticut Education Department. Our Education Department does NOT base school funding for our cities and towns on student attendance factors. Funding continues at 100% regardless of illness and truancy rates in the schools. The Department recognizes that the school system infrastructure would be severely weakened if such a policy were implemented. Let's carry that philosophy over to DDS and fund the department properly so that Attendance Based Funding can be taken off the table.

Thank you for your interest and your commitment to provide a safe and dignified environment for your neighbors who just happen to have intellectual and physical challenges.

Sincerely,

James W. Heffernan

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